

The Runaway 2: Under Siege

by Dissidia180

Category: How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Adventure, Friendship

Language: English

Characters: Hiccup, OC, Toothless, Valka

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2014-09-20 18:49:30

Updated: 2015-01-19 23:37:31

Packaged: 2016-04-26 22:30:40

Rating: T

Chapters: 14

Words: 19,588

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: When a rare breed dragon and rider attack the village, Hiccup knows that there is only one person he can turn to to protect the village (Part Two of The Runaway series)

1. Rudely Interrupted

Ooh, I've been waiting so long for this! The Runaway 2: Under Siege. It's finally here! I hope you're as excited as I am!

The brisk night was filled to the brim with stars in all colours; greens; reds; blues; all set like diamonds in a sparkling velvet quilt of deepest, darkest blue. Not a single wisp of cloud brushed the face of the sky, lending a nipping chill to the autumn air and leaving the dazzling moon to shine brightly down on all of them, its light every bit as bright as the sun. Below the silken sky, a rippling cushion of sea swirled and shimmered, the reflection of the moon like a pathway across its calm surface, so clear and solid you could almost step out onto it.

Berk clung to the moon-bathed rocks like a limpet, its many buildings set alight with silver strands. The fullness of the orb in the sky was such that no-one needed to light the lamps. There was light enough to see without them. The squat, broad, wooden buildings slept peacefully beside one another, weather vanes and water towers poking up in places. To one cliff was clamped the dragon's stables, with the dragon wash nearby and the dragons themselves tucked up warmly inside. Around the village snaked the maze of gutters and gulleys, all filled with water; their fire protection system. Upon the upper decking of the grandstand, a lone figure and dragon sat, cuddled up to one another for warmth, looking out across the shimmering vista of the sea.

"Well, Meatlug, now you can see why I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. Just look at this!" Fishlegs threw his arms out wide, trying to somehow capture and frame the perfect image of the night to keep in

his mind forever. If he could take any snapshot of the view, it would be this one. Sighing contentedly, he leant back against his dragon's warm belly, breathing the scorched scent of dragon scales deeply into his lungs. Nothing could be more perfect than this.

"A beautiful night on watch with my beautiful dragon. Nothing could be better!" He beamed, patting his Gronkle on the nose. Meatlug was heavy and strong, her thick, rocky skin encasing a gentle and kind interior. Her stone-crushing jaws were nothing to her but a way to eat and to nibble and to lick in the most affectionate ways. There really was nothing scary about Meatlug at all. As soft as a sponge, she and her rider fitted together like the pieces of a jigsaw.

Fishlegs was a tall, stocky boy, broad-shouldered and strong, and yet, he too was as gracious and courteous as his dragon. His knowledge of the creatures was rivalled by no man, for he kept the Book of Dragons, the Vikings' compendium of the entirety of their information on everything scaled and reptilian. This book was the most precious weapon in all the Berkian's arsenal, for with it, they could tell the strengths and weaknesses of every single dragon in the world. The precious volume was safely stored away at Fishleg's house, leaving him free to relax on his night patrol.

Suddenly, an unusual wave disturbed the softly rippling waters. Fishleg's scowled, becoming tense. His dragon sat up warily, giving an uneasy growl as she searched the skies. The young man barely dared to breath, scouring the landscape for any sight, sound or feel of an intruder. Suddenly, Meatlug relaxed, and Fishlegs was almost on the verge of convincing himself that he was imagining things when suddenly, he heard something.

His heart skipped a beat. A sort of rustling, snuffling coming from behind him, the timid tapping of tiny claws. Could it just be a Terrible Terror come to bother him in the night? Or could it possibly be something more sinister? The plump Viking stood and turned just a second before the first explosion rang out.

He uttered a scream quite unbecoming of a man his size, staring at the rising silver cloud in horror. It bloomed like a mushroom, up into the cold night air. He could see fire, smell burning, hear screams as the occupants were awoken abruptly from their sleep. Then, came another, off to the north. This time, he watched as the shaped charge, purplish in hue, whizzed through the air with a hoarse screech and tore into the ground, tossing mud and shrapnel high into the air. His blood froze colder than the harshest winter.

"Toothless?"

There could be no doubt. Their alpha dragon was destroying the village. The blasts could only belong to a Night Fury; he'd never before seen a dragon with fire like it. And the shape, and the speed, and the size, it all seemed to match, though it was hard to tell. A black dragon before the darkness of the night sky is never an easy thing to spot. Calculating quickly, he realised that their Alpha had to be very high in the sky, meaning only that the chief must be with him. The Night Fury could not fly alone. His prosthetic tail fin was controlled by his rider as he flew, and that was none other than Hiccup, chief of the Hooligan tribe to which he belonged.

Everything was beginning to make his head hurt. What was going on? Why would Hiccup and Toothless, their ever kind and nurturing leaders, attack the village? Had they had enough? Were they so very upset that neither one could control their emotions? Another blast rang out into the night, this time from the east. Then another, to the west. Another, to the far side of town.

"They're moving way too fast! I knew Toothless was good, but I never thought he could rapid-fire like that!" Fishlegs cried aloud, grabbing a comforting hold of his dragon. She gave a snort, looking all about her with her teeth bared. "Wait... what if it's not them? What if it's another dragon? One that's even more powerful than our Alpha?" He gulped at the horrendous thought. "Well, Meatlug, there's only one way to find out whether it's Hiccup and Toothless or not. Come on!"

Toothless' head shot into the air, turning this way and that, the growths atop his head standing on end like ears and pulsing with the sound of explosions. He gave an uneasy grunt, standing up and sticking his head out of the small skylight. Instantly, the sulphurous smoke hit his sensitive nostrils. He gave a cry as he spotted the little flickering fires lapping at the clouds as they began to spring up around Berk. Instantly, he was below again, nudging his rider awake.

Hiccup pushed him roughly away, completely oblivious, and rolled over. "No, Toothless. Please, let me sleep..." His dragon gave another frenzied screech, jumping about this way and that, trying to get his rider's attention. Hiccup only realised properly that there was a problem when he heard Fishlegs beating on his door outside, screaming his name. He sat up to the impatient gaze of his beloved dragon, giving him an unhappy look.

"Sorry, Bud," He muttered lamely, tossing his sheets off and reaching for his prosthetic leg, usually on his bedside cupboard, but now... no-where to be seen. He gazed around frantically until his dragon dropped it into his lap, satisfied that he had got his rider back for ignoring him.

"Ha ha, very funny, Toothless." Scolding his dragon, the chief attached his leg and rushed down to throw open the door.

"Took you long enough!" Fishlegs was hopping from foot to foot, flapping his arms restlessly as the explosions continued behind him.

"Fishlegs!" Hiccup cried, taking in the unholy sight for the first time. He staggered blearily out into the blanket of the night, blinking as the fire and smoke stung his eyes. "What on earth is going on?"

Dun dun dun! What could be causing this calamity? Could it possibly be a new breed of dragon? Find out soon!_

2. Mother's Love

New Chapter! So what is going on? Find out here! I'm a little disappointed that I've only managed to get 33 views on the first

chapter of this, but then again, there are a lot of stories going up at the moment and it may be through me being lazy when I uploaded. Anyway, for those who are reading, thank you!_

Jesusfreak:_ Good to hear from you again! This is post-HTTYD2, as you will see in this chapter, with them mentioning Stoick's death and Valka and Cloudjumper featuring. It's quite alright, I never have the time or the motivation to review stuff, as my friend Hiccupisnotuseless will understand!_

"Is it a Night Fury? Or are they something else?" The chief turned to his friend. The plump Viking shrugged unhelpfully.

"I guess it must be. Is there another type of dragon that can fire Plasma Blasts like that? Besides, no dragon can move that fast!"

"You're right..." Hiccup stroked his chin as he puzzled over the thought. He watched more explosions ripple through the cold air and strike the ground of his precious village. The Vikings covered their heads as they were making for safety in the Great Hall. Even Toothless couldn't move that fast or shoot that quickly, he was sure of it. "There has to be more than one!"

"More than one what?" A tall, lean figure appeared behind them from Hiccup's doorway. His mother stepped out into the firelight, a look of horror plastered on her face. Her son watched the change in emotion on his mother's face, going from shock to fear to anger in seconds. "What in Valhalla is going on out here?"

"That's what we're trying to find out!" Hiccup scowled thoughtfully. Then, he made a move towards his dragon. "I'm going up. I have to see what's going on up there."

"No, Hiccup, it's too dangerous!" Valka grabbed his shoulder in a strong grip. Her face was frozen in a stern frown. "You have to stay here, where it's safer."

"Mum, Toothless and I can protect ourselves! We'll be fine! I don't want the village thinking I'll be the kind of chief to stand back and let others do the work." The young man folded his arms like a pouting child. His mother shook her head slowly.

"No, you certainly don't, but that's not the point. Better to be a chief who'll stand back and stay safe than one who might get himself injured or worse just rushing into battle at the drop of a helmet. Besides," She sighed, and her son thought he spied the glimmer of a tear in her eye, "We've just lost one chief. It's no good to lose another so soon." Hiccup bit his lip; he couldn't argue with her, as much as he might like to. So, against his will, he stood back and let her step forward to pat his shoulder.

"Cloudjumper, let's go!" She cried. The woman was answered by the shriek of a Stormcutter, her four-winged dragon leaping up onto the ledge on which the house stood and lowering his head for her to climb aboard. His neck-frills ruffled as another blast rang out, his large, yellow eyes blinking rapidly. As he took off, his silver-brown scales glittering, his massive red tail-fin angled to gain altitude. His head swivelled back and forth as he searched for his enemy, but the creatures zipped by with lightning speed. The Stormcutter pulled up

to a hover, spinning around for his rider to get a good look at the scene.

Down on the ground, Hiccup wore a face like thunder, his arms still folded angrily. He couldn't believe it. She'd gone in his place! It didn't help that his dragon kept on nudging him and encouraging him to climb aboard and fly. Fishlegs was keeping his distance, looking around nervously, his gaze always flicking back to the young man's face. Suddenly, the chief's brows shot up as though he's just had a brilliant idea.

"Fishlegs! Gather the other riders!" He snapped. As the plump Viking set off, muttering various hurried agreements, he turned to his dragon and cupped the Night Fury's rounded jaw in his hands. "Get yourself up somewhere high and shoot one of those things down. I wanna see one up close, to see what we're up against, and I know you can do it better than anyone." With a happy snort, Toothless pulled away and leapt up onto the roof of the house.

Suddenly, the dragon was in his element. His sharp eyes scanned the skies, nostrils flared for scent, ear flaps raised up high, looking for all the world like a crown atop his head. He followed the movement of one particular dot with every muscle until, with a flourish, he fired one of his own powerful shots. The sky was lit up bright violet, like a bolt of lightning, and hit something just above the centre square. Looking proud of himself, Toothless sat and pulled himself up into a dominant pose, head up, as though he had just won the whole battle with a single shot.

Hiccup was quick to utilise his riders as they came rushing towards him. "Stormfly, fetch!" He called out to his lover's Deadly Nadder. The bird-like creature instantly changed course, leaving her rider behind with a swish of her spiked tail to snatch up whatever Toothless had just shot down. His eyes fell upon the woman now walking towards him with a disapproving look on her face, her hands on her hips.

"Shouldn't you ask permission before you use a girl's dragon?" She chided, raising her eyebrows as she stopped beside him.

"Yeah, well, it's an emergency." Hiccup's snappish reply took her by surprise. She dropped the pretence of her anger and took a step closer, reaching out to put a hand on his shoulder, a hand that he shrugged off restlessly.

"Hiccup, what's the matter? Why aren't you up there with your mother?"

"That's exactly what's the matter. She won't let me." He growled. The uncharacteristic emotion was ugly in his usually soft voice.

"Why not?" She tried to control her own emotions as much as she could so as not to provoke him further. She'd never seen Hiccup any more angry than this, and didn't wish to, either.

"She says I've got to stay safe, that we can't lose another chief. It's a load of rubbish"

Astrid cringed. "I hate to say it, Hiccup, but she's got a point..."

"I know. That's what's bugging me." His irritable reply made her feel as though he was trying to block her out, to distance himself. She bit her lip.

"Come on, Hiccup, it's not that bad, surely!" She tried again to squeeze his shoulder, and he finally conceded, turning towards her with a sigh.

"I'm not weak, Astrid. I can handle this."

"I know you can, sweetie, but it's not always the best thing to do..."

Valka scoured the skies, watching as the little dragons flitted back and forth, around the one that had fallen. Stormfly was having trouble getting to it, being nipped and bitten by those protecting their own. Suddenly, they all stopped dead, holding their heads up in the same direction, and she finally had a good look at them.

They couldn't have been much bigger than Terrible Terrors, with big, wide wings, all as black as midnight, with little beady black eyes. What intrigued her the most were their tails. There were two main fins, just like those of a Night Fury, but along the top above them ran a third, smaller one. All of a sudden, as quickly as they came, they were gone, flapping off into the distance. She heard a whip crack somewhere in the darkness, and suddenly, they came at her in a group, screeching and charging their powerful attacks.

Oh no, Valka! Will she be okay? And who's cracking that whip?

3. Valka Falls

What happens to Valka? Find out here! Sorry it's late, I had a ton of stuff to do yesterday!

Hiccupisnotuseless: Thanks a lot! You're very kind. And nope, they're not Smokebreaths, but good guess!

Guest: Well, you'll find out here!

Toothflyhiccstrid4eva: OKAY!

Jesusfreak: Don't worry about it! I'm sorry to keep you all waiting!

Cloudjumper twisted cleanly in the air to avoid the on-coming creatures, circling round to bathe them in his swirling vortex of fire. However, they came zooming through the flames to attack him and his rider again. Valka shielded her face with her arms as they swarmed her, nipping and biting and puffing hot purple flame. The Stormcutter's wings came snapping up beside her and slammed into the tiny dragons, knocking them away. He span about and prepared to fight again.

Hiccup could see his mother struggling up above, but he didn't feel calm enough to worry. He knew she'd be alright, and he could send help if she needed it. He looked out into the sky. There was... something out there, silhouetted against the moon, a great hovering

shape. If anything, he'd say this dragon was the ringleader, the one in control of all the others. Something told him he had to get a closer look. He turned to Astrid. "I'm going up."

"No, Valka said--"

"I don't care. Get Fishlegs to identify the dragon and keep the others out of the way." Without another word, Hiccup climbed onto his dragon's back and was away into the sky, Toothless' wings eating up the distance with ease. The black shape grew and grew, and he began to make out details. He could see huge, bony plates covering its wide shoulders and back, its massive head and thick jaws, its impressive wings. Something about this dragon seemed familiar.

He could see the rider now, perched upon its back, a huge whip clasped in their hand which, on occasion, they would swing around their head or crack as though that was what was controlling the dragons. Hiccup shouted to get their attention, circling around and watching as the massive creature turned its small eyes towards him. Its wings swept it around so that the moonlight illuminated its features. Hiccup couldn't suppress a gasp.

Built like a Rhino with wings, the body shape was unmistakable. Toothless stopped in mid air. The whip cracked again, but the chief could hardly hear it. Everything felt muffled as the shock worked its way through his system.

"I-It can't be... he's... he's dead..." Hiccup gulped, Toothless making an uneasy sound beneath him. "I can't believe it... It's her... Kat is back..."

The Night Fury screeched, and suddenly, everything was a hail of tiny dragons clawing and snapping at him. The young man gave a scream, throwing his hands above his head. Toothless swiped viciously, knocking down a few of the little dragons, but all of a sudden, Hiccup heard the dreadful sound of cloth tearing, and looked back to find the prosthetic tail-fin torn straight through. The dragon wailed as he lost control of his flight. He hurtled down into a terrifying spin, trying all he could to grab hold of his rider and protect him before they slammed straight through the buildings and onto the hard ground below.

"Hiccup!" Astrid's scream could be heard all across the village, the people amassed around, watching, cringing as they realised what had happened. Clambering desperately onto her Nadder's back, the young woman urged Stormfly on and raced to find her beloved.

The chief's mother gave a cry of fury, her dragon instinctively turning to launch his attack on the dragon that had knocked down his friend. He gave a furious call, mingling with that of his rider as the two hurtled into combat with their enemy. Talons slashed and fire flashed as the two came together, the enemy dragon defending itself against the onslaught with its thick, bony plates. Its jaws then crunched too close to Cloudjumper's wings for comfort. He slashed again, catching the softer skin on its leg, pulling away as the creature cried out.

"Hiccup!" Astrid was out of her dragon's saddle before the Nadder had even landed. "Oh, Gods, please tell me you're alright!" Before her, a path of destruction lay. Splinters of shrapnel littered the ground

where the man and dragon had hit the shack, the house left without most of its roof. The dust around them was just settling away, revealing a huddled, black shape curled into a protective ball in the centre of the rubble. Toothless looked as though he was encased in a nest of shattered, splintered wooden panels, just lifting his head and shaking the shock from his mind. Astrid knelt beside him, reaching out to touch his nose, her face a picture of worry.

"Please tell me you got him, Toothless..." She whispered. As if in response, he gave a slight, jerky nod and unfurled his wings. His rider rolled out of his grasp, struggling to get to his feet, looking distant and almost... afraid. Astrid reached out to touch his cheek.

"Hiccup? Are... are you okay?"

"It's her, Astrid... it's her..." He mumbled, looking about with a certain feverishness. His body trembled with shock, his skin pale and clammy to the touch.

"Who? Who is it?"

He looked her in the eyes. "It's Kat. She's back."

The dragon hissed and spat, its ears pinned back against its head and crushing teeth bared, crammed like daggers into its pink gums. Cloudjumper gnashed his teeth in return, both trying to intimidate the other as they circled around one another, getting ready for another clash.

"Give up, intruder! You cannot win and you are not welcome here!" Valka's voice rode across the rising wind with a shocking intensity, like a horn signalling her message.

"You are wrong, my lady! It is you who will not succeed!" A loud, masculine voice answered her. The figure rose up shakily onto their feet upon their dragon's back, brandishing a sword high above their head.

"So be it!" The chief's mother roared, and Cloudjumper jumped forward with a burst of flame. The creature met their attack with a strong head-butt, knocking the other dragon away.

Ruffnut stood upon the rooftop, watching the fight with a certain sick amusement that was shared by her twin brother. Her body was tense, ready at any moment to move and to answer the call of anyone in need, but for the moment, the two siblings were so engrossed in the fight that they could barely peel their eyes away. Beside them, their dragon, a wide-bodied Hideous Zippleback was perched precariously, its two heads bobbing up and down, side to side, serpent-like, in time with the movements of the fighters above.

"This is so cool!" Tuffnut blurted out, brushing his scores of platinum blonde dreadlocks out of his face. "I totally missed Cloudjumper fighting when we were battling the Bewilderbeast!"

"I know," His sister grinned, pointed teeth flashing, "I love this job."

The two dragons came together again, teeth tearing and jaws snapping as they fought. Cloudjumper sent a spiralling shot of flame hurtling into the Rainfire's wing, knocking it off course, and it replied with a spattering of its own, unnatural, blue liquid flame. The strange substance washed over the base of his tail, luckily missing his rider, and all of a sudden, the Stormcutter uttered a high-pitched screech, bucking and spinning into a pain-fuelled frenzy. So upset was he that he didn't notice his rider fly off over his shoulder or hear her scream as she fell away and away, towards the ground.

Dun dun dun! Will Valka be okay? Only time will tell! (actually, I'm also going to be telling, but there we go!) And finally, a name for the breed! If you hadn't guessed, a Rainfire is what Blueflame was and what this dragon is. Whoop!

4. Kat?

Here, the question will be answered. Will Valka be okay? Find out now! Now, I must tell you this, lest you be offended when the next chapters don't appear: I'm going away for a week as of in about 30 minutes, so the next chapter will be uploaded hopefully Sunday night, if not, Monday morning **in a weeks time.** Sorry! Also, this isn't proof read, so point out any errors I've missed!

Guest: Is it Kat? Is it not? Hmmm... And yes, the Rainfire is Blueflame's breed.

Hiccupisnotuseless: Yup, they're a bad dude! Thanks very much, I always love to hear from you. Enjoy this chapter!

Valka let out a scream of terror as the ground came flying up to meet her, impossibly fast, looming up to swallow her into a pit of black death. She closed her eyes, silently apologising to Hiccup. How would her son cope without her after losing his father not so long ago? She chided herself for not holding on tighter, for not being more careful. She should have known. She should have been more thoughtful. But that was all behind her now. Valhalla stretched out before her, ready to engulf her in its open arms...

Thwack!

"Welcome aboard Zippleback airlines! We hope you enjoy your flight." Valka's brow creased, and she opened her eyes to find her arms in the tight grip of the Twins, dangling as she was between their dragon's heads. Tuffnut laughed at his joke while his sister scowled, unimpressed, and then cast a smile at her chief's mother.

"You okay there, Mrs H?" She asked, her gravelly voice abrasive against Valka's ears.

"I think so, yes!" She replied, not quite fully comprehending the situation. With flair, the two siblings swung her back so that she landed between the necks of their dragon. Holding on, she let everything come back to her; Cloudjumper's bucking; the fall and now this.

"I don't understand... why did Cloudjumper throw me? He's never done that before. And over a little fire, well, really!"

"I dunno, something's weird about that dragon's fire." Tuffnut tried to explain.

"Yeah," His sister expanded, "Hiccup said it's something about the liquid fire going under his scales and burning him. See, dragons don't know what burning feels like, so it's a bit scary for them, I guess."

"I supposed it makes sense..." Valka calmly mulled it over. A sudden noise behind her made her turn to look and start. "Uhm, Ruff? Tuff? Can your dragon fly any faster? We seem to have company..."

The twins looked around, horror plain on their faces, as behind them, a dark shape loomed. The vicious creature snapped its huge jaws as it knifed towards them horrifyingly, crunching down close to Barf and Belch's tails. The Zippleback put on a burst of speed, warbling timidly. However, the creature continued to give chase. The dragon came closer and closer, Barf and Belch weaving this way and that to try to throw it off their course, but it didn't seem to work. Valka clenched her fists tightly and stood, ready to board the dragon and take on its rider head to head.

All of a sudden, it was shunted away by an immense force. With a trumpeting call, Cloudjumper's four wings carried him up above the creature's unruly path, lashing out with sharp claws. He fluttered above a spattered shot of blue flame and angled down towards his rider, on whom his gaze was locked, her staff clasped between his sharp teeth. Dropping it into her outstretched hands, he stretched out his neck and allowed her to clamber up onto his shoulders.

"Thanks for the lift!" She called to the twins, who both gave her a cheery wave as they banked away towards the growing group of dragon riders gathering near the chief's house. Valka reached out and traced the angry red marks across her dragon's skin with fingers trembling with rage. "How could they do this to you? How dare they hurt you! Don't worry, Cloudjumper, for what they have done to you, and to Hiccup, they shall pay..."

"It had to be her! I know it was!" Hiccup was beginning to get angry at Astrid's insistence that he was wrong. Around them, a crowd of confused and scared villagers was growing.

"Hiccup, please, can we go inside and discuss this?" His lover cast a worried glance about her, fearful that the Vikings would begin to think their chief was going mad.

"No! Listen to me! I don't know how she's done it. I don't know why, and I don't know how, but she has. Kat has brought Blueflame back from the grave and now they're taking their vengeance on us all!" The horrified gasps of the Berkians around sent a chill running through Astrid. She had to do something, and quickly, before they all began to believe it.

"It has to be something else, Hiccup. Blueflame is dead. Very dead! You saw him die."

"Astrid, you're not listening-"

"Why don't you listen to yourself?!" Her sudden snap struck silence

through them all, and she instantly scolded herself for being so childish. Taking a breath, she tried to start again. "Listen to what you're saying, chief. It's all so mad and weird, it can't possibly be true! There has to be another explanation."

Though she waited expectantly for the man to catch on, all he managed to gain from her statement was: "Since when have you called me 'chief'?"

With a reverberating war-cry, Valka raised her staff high above her head as she and her dragon charged at their enemy. The Stormcutter reached out with his deadly claws, slashing at the creature as they came together. The heavy beast whipped around, unnaturally fast, clamping his jaws around Cloudjumper's leg and pulling. Meanwhile, one rider jumped from her dragon's back to the other's, slamming her staff against the foe's chest and pinning them down in one swift, slick movement.

"Don't you even dare to move!" She cried viciously. Too late, she found the sword swinging up to meet her. She stumbled, a cry escaping her lips, reaching up to clutch the long, thin wound on her arm. The other rider was getting to their feet, sword raised, swiping. Valka blocked. The sword twisted, coming back the other way. Again, her staff met the blade. The chief's mother took a step back as a foot came flying into her chest. Staggering, she fell back onto her own dragon. The other rider raised the sword as though they were going to throw it like a javelin into her chest.

"Incoming!" The shout tore through the noise of the dragons fighting. An explosion rippled across the huge beast's back, knocking the rider off his feet, and a fierce-looking dragon swooped across through its smoke screen. The rider cast Valka a smooth grin, full of life and determination. Snotlout gripped Hookfang's horns tightly they came back around to face the creature again. As they fired again, Cloudjumper managed to get his foot out of his foe's mouth and dropped away, fluttering and unstable.

Valka looked up as Snotlout suddenly turned to come straight at the other dragon, flying right at its head. "No!" She cried, scrambling to her feet. "What is he doing? He'll be killed, and so will Hookfang!" Cloudjumper echoed her thoughts with a whine. They watched with horror as Snotlout raised his arms and let himself drop from the saddle, while his dragon continued to sneer at his enemy. Just as expected, the massive beast opened its jaws and bathed the Nightmare in flame. However, quite to her surprise, instead of crying out in pain as he was burned, his entire body burst into flame.

As his dragon crashed into the other, teeth and claws flying, his rider was picked up by none other than the twins again, on yet another rescue mission. The three were cheering and grinning from ear to ear. Valka laughed out loud as the dragon gave a screech and turned for the sea, fleeing from the snorting, snarling Monstrous Nightmare as he spat flame to boast of his victory. He let out a loud roar, to which the entire village cheered. They had won.

Hiccup ran to his mother as she landed, throwing his arms around her. "Mum! I'm so glad that you're alright!"

"As am I, Hiccup. Your riders really are quite something, don't you think?" She held him at arms length, smiling broadly, until she

noticed the dullness in his eyes, the lopsidedness of his open-mouthed grin, the paleness of his skin. "Are you feeling alright?"

"Oh, nothing to worry about, just a fall I had. So we've got rid of her again, then?"

"Her?" Confusion clouded Valka's face.

"Yeah! Kat, that rider. She and Berk have a history, right, Astrid?" He turned to his girlfriend, stood behind him, cringing. She shook her head, and Hiccup frowned angrily.

"Hiccup, that rider was a man!" His mother raised an eyebrow as he turned back to her, bemused. "I'm afraid there's no way it could possibly be the rider you think it is."

"Blueflame is dead, Hiccup! It has to be another dragon of the same breed," Astrid put in, hoping against hope that he would finally listen. She gulped; he was becoming paler by the minute.

"No... no, it's not true! Look, I'll show you. We'll show you! Toothless and I, we'll go and get them..." He turned to the Night Fury, who was looking at him dubiously and very purposefully licking his wounds. He ignored his rider's irritated look. Hiccup was beginning to wobble on his feet, his movements becoming lethargic and slow.

"Maybe you should come inside, chief," Astrid ventured, holding out her arm to him. He pushed it away unsteadily.

"I think that's a good idea. Come, everyone, time to go back to sleep! We can sort out this mess in the morning!" Valka took charge, shooing the crowds away from her confused son.

"Does no-one believe me?" Hiccup wailed, looking for all the world as though he was about to burst into tears. There was a certain pain in his expression that tugged at the heartstrings of both the women beside him. "No, that's it! I'll show you all!" He stumbled towards Toothless, who jumped to his feet and backed away worriedly. "I'm... I... I'm gonna..." He stopped dead, breathing heavily, beads of sweat beginning to form on his ghostly-white brow. "I... I think I need to sit down..."

With that, the chief finally dropped to his knees, the brightness of his eyes going out like a lamp as he slumped to his side and, with a groan, allowed the blackness to swallow him up.

Whoops! Looks like Hiccup took more of a knock to the head than anyone thought! So who was that rider they were fighting? Find out soon! I'd like to just take a moment to thank Pendulum for the albums In Silico and Immersion, without which this story couldn't have happened (They're my soundtrack to this story). See you next time, peeps!

5. Aftermath

_Anyone else think Hiccup overdid it in the last chapter? The reason he passed out is because he whacked his head, nothing else! Other

than that, he's completely fine._

Guest: I'm pretty sure you reviewed all of my chapters at once, so thank you very much! I'm glad you're enjoying the story so much. Stay tuned for more!

Hiccup's eyes fluttered open as the first rays of the morning sun shone through his window, lighting up the wall behind him. He shivered, his teeth chattering noisily as he stretched out his aching arms to pull the covers tighter around him. As soon as he moved, his dragon appeared beside him like a miracle, breathing warm, fish-scented air into his face. It was enough to make him feel queasy, and he pushed Toothless' face away, wrinkling his nose in disgust. The Night Fury took to lying across the end of his bed, bright green eyes shining like orbs up at him, wide and loving. Hiccup didn't protest to the weight across his legs; in fact, the dragon was acting like a huge hot water bottle, his warm innards heating up the cold feet of the man.

As Hiccup tried to get back to sleep, he could feel his dragon slowly inching closer to his face. Every few minutes, he'd make a move as though rearranging himself, conveniently sliding his head a few inches further across the man's body. At first, the chief didn't mind. In fact, it was rather nice to be warm again. However, as that fishy smell came closer and more of the dragon's weight pressed down upon his stomach, he decided that enough was enough.

"Toothless, stop it, bud!" He chided playfully, tapping the adoring Night Fury on the nose. Toothless made a noise of protest, snorting as he lifted his head and butted Hiccup's hand away. "Come on, I have to get up! As much as I may not like it, the village needs me..."

Outside, the people were milling about as they did when he was young, rebuilding the damaged areas with a practice that came only of doing it every day since the day you were born. It was only 6 years since peace was made with the dragons, and the Vikings had lost none of their skill and calm in that time. The chief surveyed the rows of thick timber houses, the places where they had been blasted from the cliffs. He could even spy where he and his dragon had crashed, which hadn't yet been readied for repair. Biting his lip, he gave his sore head a ginger rub, stepping to one side as his careless dragon came tumbling down from the roof beside him in all his playful glory. Snuffling, Toothless gave his rider a lick on the cheek before scuttling off. If he had been human, Hiccup imagined that he would most certainly be chuckling.

"Hiccup! My boy, you're awake!" He span around to face his mother, a cold stone settling in his stomach. He was still a little stirred up from the night before. Obviously, she noticed it in his face, and stubbornly harrumphed, her nose wrinkling. "I'm not going to apologise for what I did."

"I could still have gone up." He replied curtly, trying not to sound too angry. After all, this was his mother; he certainly didn't want to upset her.

"I only did what any good mother would. Or any good father, for that matter..."

She didn't have to say his name for Hiccup to know exactly who she spoke of. Stoick the Vast, the previous chief of the village and Hiccup's father. He had sacrificed himself to protect his son and was killed in the process. Hiccup felt his throat close, and he turned away, trying to cough out the feelings that churned inside him. His mother appeared beside him, laying a gentle hand on his shoulder, trying to both catch his eye and to avoid his gaze at the same time, in that odd way that she did.

"Look, Hiccup... I know it was probably silly of me not to say anything, but I just... don't want to risk losing you too..."

"I know, mum..." the chief mumbled softly. "I know..."

"Hiccup!" The man looked up at the mention of his name, his eyebrows raised. As he saw Fishlegs and Meatlug bounding towards him, they hastily dropped again into his signature _'Oh no, not this again' _face. As the plump Viking came close, he doubled over, wheezing for breath. Hiccup's mother smiled knowingly at him as they waited for their friend to catch his breath.

"Hiccup, the dragon!" He coughed. "You need to come and have a look!"

From the depths of his dark house, Fishlegs emerged, cage in hand. Inside, the little black dragon was curled into a tight ball, hiding from the sudden sunlight. Its obsidian scales glinted softly, little wings shaking to the beating of its heart. The plump Viking carefully placed it on the ground and smiled to his leader.

"I don't think it's keen on sunlight," He spoke softly so as not to alarm the animal. "It's a new species, Hiccup. I really wanna document it in the Book of Dragons and see what else it can do!"

"Sounds great, Fishlegs!" Hiccup peered through the bars of the cage as the little dragon began to slowly uncurl. Its eyes glared back like little black pearls set in its scaly jet crown. He could now clearly see the three fins on its tail and the long trailers along its wings. Its high forehead and wide fins gave it a fish-like appearance, save for the jaws full of deadly little teeth. "...unfortunately, I don't have the time to help you out; otherwise, I certainly would. I've got a lot of planning to do."

"Sure thing, chief!" With a nod, the plump Viking bustled busily away, taking the now squeaking dragon with him back into the depths of his shack.

"What do you mean, planning? What have we got to plan?" Astrid put her hands on her hips as she gazed curiously at him, making him start as she suddenly appeared by his side. He tried to hide his scowl.

"The village was just attacked. If it happened once, it'll happen again, just like it did last time. You remember how relentless she was, Astrid..."

"Wait, Hiccup. You don't seriously still think it was Brynhild up there, do you?"

"I... well, I thought..." Hiccup frowned, carefully mulling it over. "You know what? You're right. Now I think about it, there's no way it could have been Blueflame. We buried him ourselves. Which means..."

"...This person is from the same place as Brynhild!" Astrid finished his sentence for him, a certain excitement growing in her rising eyebrows and wide eyes. "Oh Gods, Hiccup, another new enemy? As soon as this? We've only just managed to rebuild the village after Drago and the Bewilderbeast!"

"What if she knows them?" Hiccup stroked his bristly chin thoughtfully.

"Huh?" Astrid was caught off-guard.

"Bryn. What if she knows this person? What if they were friends or something? She could talk some sense into him!"

"And, whatever and whoever this guy is, she knows more about the Rainfire than anyone else. She must know all its weak spots and everything else!"

"Astrid, gather all the other riders." She knew that tone of voice. The tone that said _'I know what I'm doing. I have a plan.'_ Grinning, she scampered off. Hiccup turned his eyes to the skies above. "We need Brynhild's help."

It wasn't her! I fooled you all! However, don't fret; she will soon put in her appearance. Hopefully, she'll get there before the Rainfire and Triffins strike again...

6. A New Journey

Well, my break may have been a little longer than anticipated, but I'm back with a brand new chapter! Woohoo! Reasons for my absence? Well... mostly a lack of inspiration. That and having a French Exchange student staying. It's incredible how much work I've got done when I'm not constantly writing now, though! For this reason, I'm going to slow updates to a weekly thing. Sorry guys!

Hiccupisnotuseless: How indeed will they find her? Actually, you'll find out next chapter. Hiccup and Bryn were very clever people...

Guest: Such is the eternal question!

Guest: Don't be too anxious, he's not that nice! After everything, I'm pretty sure Brynhild was the obvious choice for help, but whether she will or not remains untold

Guest: Well, read on to find out!

Guest: Another Thing is actually just another story idea I had going up to meet the yacht that I was sailing on, so really, it may or may not come about. I want a boat because, well, who doesn't? Actually, it's because I went sailing for a week, but yeah...

The six dragon riders stormed down the street, all pacing in time, creating a din with every heavy step. The chief was out in front, his head held high, the light wind brushing through his long dregs of hair. His bristly chin was stuck straight out with an air of importance. Behind him minced his second-in-command, an axe over one shoulder and her free arm swinging widely. By her side, Snotlout swaggered through the dusty street, boots scuffing through the cracked, dry mud, broad, muscular shoulders hunched. Near the back of the group, a cage rattled as Fishleg's quick, light steps jolted it from side to side. The Triffin inside looked thoroughly ill, trying to nip at the thick, flabby arms that encircled its prison. Then, at the back, the lanky, blonde twins jostled and fought, mean, snarling looks plastered on their arguably ugly faces.

All in all, the crowd was very imposing, and coupled with the dragons following on behind, they were gathering wide-eyed looks from villagers all around. It was not often that the entire academy was seen at once. Not these days, anyway. From the outcrop on which the chief's house was built, Valka watched the procession with arms folded and lips pursed. Her son was certainly up to something.

"So, Hiccup, exactly where are we going?" Fishlegs piped up from the back. He was falling behind the rushed pace of the other riders, waddling frantically, unable to keep up with the weight of the cage clasped in his arms.

"We're paying a visit to a friend. I need his help." The chief answered curtly, never even shifting his gaze.

"I have a question," Astrid sounded distinctly distasteful. "When are you gonna stop being so mysterious? It was okay to begin with, but now it's just annoying."

"We're going to see Eret," Hiccup scowled over his shoulder.

"What do we need him for? He isn't even that good at riding dragons!"

"Well, it's not exactly Eret we need..."

As the rag-tag group bustled into the bare-looking garden of a looming, blackened wooden shack, a young man not much older than the rest came striding from his house, arms open wide and grinning from ear to ear. Eret tended to keep to himself here on the edge of town, furthering his bond with his dragon, Skullcrusher, who had once belonged to chief Stoick, but was now living out his days in the care of Berk's newest dragon rider. The dragon was lazily sunning himself, wings open wide to the early morning sun. The days were warmer now, and all the dragons were certainly enjoying it.

"Chief Hiccup! What can I do for you?" The young ex-trapper smiled widely. "Need some dragons trapped? I'm always up for that!"

"First of all, you can all gather around me. I need to speak to you all." He waited until he could see each rider's face, meet each of their eyes, before he began to speak. "As you may have noticed, Berk is under attack, and I'm not willing to sit down and take this beating. However, these dragons are like nothing we've seen before," He gestured to the Triffin in Fishleg's cage to his right. "However, the one controlling them rides one that we have seen before, and it

was a dark, dark day when we did. We need to find the girl who rode it, because she knows more about this dragon than any other, and I believe she'll help us defeat this one without hurting it."

Eret pulled a face, much to his chief's surprise. "If it's trying to kill us, why should we care whether or not we hurt it?"

Astrid stepped forward before Hiccup could conjure a counter. "Eret, don't you understand? The dragon isn't the one trying to hurt us, it's the rider who is."

"No dragon is a bad dragon," Hiccup agreed with a brief nod. "It just does what it's told and no more."

"But I don't understand. If they're so clever, how come they don't know what they're doing is wrong?" Eret waved his hands in a jerky gesture of defiance. Hiccup's face was set in a calm scowl as he replied.

"Before we go on, let me ask you something. If I asked you to go into battle with me, would you do it?"

"Well, of course! I trust you." Eret folded his arms, eyebrows raised questioningly.

"But what if it was wrong? What if you found out that they were good, peaceful people after you slaughtered them?"

Eret blanched, snorting in surprise. "What does this have to do with dragons?"

"They follow their leader because they trust them, like you trust me. It's not their fault if they don't understand what they're doing. We've already learned that good dragons under the control of bad people do bad things..." He cast a glance behind him, to where his own black dragon was basking in the sun. Biting his lip, he turned to the ground, then shifted his gaze back up to the man before him. "So... will you help us?"

Eret pursed his lips as though mulling it over, though when he answered, his voice was strong and resounding: "Yes. I'll help you."

The ex-trapper clung to the saddle of his dragon as Skullcrusher snorted and pawed at the ground. The dragon was restless, anxious to get up into the sky. Around them, Hiccup had gathered all of his friends, and the six turned to face their chief as he cleared his throat to speak.

"As you know, Berk is under the constant threat of attack. Those dragons could return at any time, and I don't want to risk the lives of my friends or my village anymore. I've come up with a plan, but it involves all of you. If you're all willing to follow me, then listen in." As he searched the group, they began to nod their allegiance. With a smile, he continued. "Eret, your dragon is the only one who has a chance of finding Brynhild. As you all know, we'll need her help with this one. Astrid and Snotlout, I want you to go with him. It's nothing more than a safety precaution. If one of you is injured, one can stay with the casualty while the other comes straight back here to find me. Understand?"

Once again, his words were met by understanding nods. "As for the twins, you'll be staying closer to home. I want you to patrol all of Berk and look for a camp. These guys can't be hiding far away. Search the land and the sea. If they're anywhere near, I want to know. As for you, Fishlegs, you'll be staying with me and studying this new dragon. I want to know all of its abilities; its strengths; its weaknesses; everything. We need to know how to fight these things."

"Hiccup," Eret interrupted, "How is Skullcrusher meant to know what Bryn smells like? If he doesn't know, he can't find her!"

"Ah," The chief smiled mischievously, "Why don't you come with me?"

Sorry sorry sorry sorry sorry. I had writer's block, I swear!

7. Find Her

Right! I don't want to keep you waiting as long as I did last time, so here's a new chapter! And how will Hiccup and his friends find Bryn after all this time? Find out here!

Hiccupisnotuseless: Thanks again for a lovely review. Everything is fine in my life, thank you for asking. And don't worry, a couple of days isn't long to wait for the next chapter, right?

Guest: They need to find Brynhild, do they? Will you every stop asking rhetorical questions? (That's a joke, by the way, so don't be offended!)

LeoValdezishot: You are indeed right, and you will find out in this very chapter! It's rather exciting...

Guest: Awh, thanks! I think Weekly isn't too much to ask is work really gets me, but for now, it should be every three days or so. Also, I already have a Kayak, but they aren't as fun as sailing dinghys!

The chief strode into his house, passing his mother as he went in. She raised an eyebrow as he gave her a brief smirk and then dashed upstairs. Sighing, she turned away, listening in as he rummaged through his desk in his room, looking up every so often to watch his candlelit shadow flit over the wall.

"What are you looking for?" She called, easing herself down into her favourite chair. Her son took a few moments to reply.

"A handkerchief," He called down. His words were followed by a crash and yelp as he dropped something heavy on his foot.

"And when are you going to let me in on your little plan?" Looking up, she watched with amusement as his head slowly poked out around the door frame, a guilty look plastered all over his face.

"Wh-what do you mean?"

"I saw you and your riders plotting away down there. Don't ever

assume I'm stupid, son, because we all know for a fact that it's not true. I always know when you're up to something."

Slowly, the chief paced down a few steps and then flopped down onto them. "Okay, of course I'm up to something. Mum, we need help with this new enemy, and I know the perfect person, only... I'm not sure if she'll be accepted. See, she was an enemy once, too..."

"Tell me more about her," His mother sniffed, looking slightly unimpressed.

As Hiccup began to tell the tale, he walked slowly down towards her, ending up sat in the chair opposite. "She had a terrible history. Her family was slaughtered by raiders, and driven mad with grief and the desire for revenge, she and her dragon took to the skies to find the ones who did it. She was sure it was us, Mum, so she attacked, and tricked Snotlout and all of us. You remember that grave up on the hill where the flowers appear every spring? That was the only boy she killed, Gustav. Somehow, everyone else survived. But then, in one sky battle, Snotlout wounded her, and then in the next, Hookfang took her dragon's life. After that, she was totally broken, and we actually got a chance to talk to her..."

"I'm sure she had a harrowing tale to tell. But why her?" His mother looked fascinated, wide-eyed with excitement.

"Her dragon, Blueflame... he was a Rainfire, just like this new dragon enemy. Bryn will know all its weaknesses and that way, we can stop it without hurting it. As soon as its rider is off its back, I'm sure it'll calm down. They're the most placid dragons you'll ever meet, but also the most loyal..."

Valka took a second to soak in this information before she nodded. "Okay, I'm behind you on this one. However, should anything she does endanger the people, I will not hold back. Does that sound fair to you?"

Hiccup nodded excitedly.

"And how exactly do you propose to find her?"

"Well, she left me this, and if you'll come with me, I'll show you why it's important."

Hiccup and Valka strode purposefully from their dwelling, heads held high to the evening sun. The chief led his mother down the steps and out into the square, where his riders were waiting for him.

"Here, Eret!" He called jovially, holding the parchment package aloft. "This is how you'll find her!"

Eret bustled forwards, grinning from ear to ear. "Great!" He cried, then his brow creased. "What is it?"

Hiccup carefully opened the parcel, slowly drawing out its precious contents. Inside was a square of fine white cloth, slightly stained from years of use and ragged with constant scrubbing. Eret scowled. "How is this supposed to help?"

"This is the cloth Bryn used to dry her eyes when Blueflame was

killed. When she wasn't using it, she had it clasped in her hand, and we all know that stress makes our hands sweat. It should still smell enough like her for Skullcrusher to hunt her down. Take it, Eret. Give it to him. He'll know where to go."

With a nod, he snatched the handkerchief and dashed over to his dragon, leaping up onto the saddle and placing the cloth on the end of his dragon's nose. The Rumblehorn took long, deep dregs of the scent before lifting his nose to the wind. After a second, he gave a sharp roar to tell them he had found it. Hiccup walked over, giving the dragon's florescent green and red scales a pat, watching the way they changed colour as he moved around them.

"Go, Eret! And Astrid and Snotlout. Go, all of you, and bring Bryn back!"

The three dragons thundered into the sky, heading off due east, and same direction the wind had been blowing the day of Bryn's departure. The Rumblehorn could be seen pulling way ahead, stretching out his wings over the wide ocean. Hiccup turned to the rest.

"Ruffnut, Tuffnut, mount up. I want you to fly out around Berk, just as I said earlier."

"Okay!" Tuffnut leapt up into his saddle, his sister looking a little less eager than her brother. "Wait... what are we doing again?"

"We're looking for things that shouldn't be there!" His sister growled, her voice full of gravel as she gave him a deft smack. "That is what we're doing, right?" She felt as though she should check before getting carried away. When Hiccup nodded, she grinned a gap-toothed grin, proud of herself, and gave her brother another slap.

"Can you two just get going?" Hiccup scowled as the slapping was beginning to turn into a fully-fledged war. The two nodded, gripping their dragon head's horns and steering the two-headed dragon up and into the sky. Barf and Belch dipped down low, close to the water, as their wings pounded and carried them away from their home.

Hiccup sighed. "I just hope they'll be alright..." He muttered slowly, turning to his mother and Fishlegs. The plump Viking gave him a cheery grin.

"Don't worry about it, chief! I'm pretty sure they can handle themselves!"

But can they? That is the question. Check in in a couple of days to find out if they really can! I'm glad I started writing again. It's fun!

8. Distrustful

SO, what are Eret, Astrid and Snotlout up to? Will they find Bryn? Let's hope so!

"Ugh, I'm so bored!" Snotlout complained, flopping onto his dragon's neck. The group had been travelling for a few hours now and their

stories and games had very quickly run out. Astrid turned back with a mixture of amusement and annoyance.

"Well, I'm sorry you're not interested in saving the village," She snorted sarcastically.

"Stop bending my words! Of course I wanna help, I just wish it didn't take so long..."

Eret was ignoring the exchange behind him. Something felt different in his dragon, the Rumblehorn feeling tense, his movements taught. His head jerked from side to side, huge lungs filling deeply as he took in a nearby scent.

"Hey, guys, I think my dragon's found something." He called out, unsure, his face betraying his worry. Skullcrusher snorted loudly and gave a deep hum. Eret looked out across the wide expanse of the ocean, jolting upright as he spotted the tiny plinth of land rushing towards them. "Down there! I think that's where Skullcrusher is heading!"

Astrid stood up in her stirrups to catch a better glimpse. There was definitely a tiny coil of grey smoke winding up into the air from the centre. "That must be where Bryn is staying. You guys stay up in the air; I'll go down and talk to her."

"You? Why you? I reckon I'd be better at recruiting her!" Snotlout complained, much to Eret's amusement. Astrid snorted with laughter.

"We're trying to get her on our side, Snotlout, not scare her away!"

Reluctantly, Snotlout kept his mouth shut as Astrid smirked out her victory. Then, in a flash, she was gone, holding on to Stormfly's saddle as the Nadder brought her close to the island. The dragon gave a loud call, tilting her head to listen in. They hovered in silence for a few seconds before they heard a deep, rumbling reply. Through the thin trees, they spotted movement. A green flash of scales, the rush of a figure running. All of a sudden, they appeared on the beach. A girl not much younger than herself and her dragon, a forest-green Gronkle that was wagging its tail a dribbling in its excitement. The lady, however, drew her sword, her shoulders hunched and hostile. With slow, deliberate movements, she stepped up onto her dragon's back.

As Brynhild came closer to the bright cyan Nadder, she began to make out strikingly familiar features on both the dragon and rider. Her sword still raised, she leant forward, eyes narrowed, examining her visitor. Just as she opened her mouth to speak, she spotted the other riders nearby, Skullcrusher being held back by his rider. Her sword flew up, glinting in the sunlight, teeth bared.

"Who are you? What do you want?" The strong, brave, accented voice blared out over the light wind. Astrid's heart skipped a beat. She could remember that voice, all those years ago, drifting to her through a vale of unconsciousness as she was whisked away into the air. Kidnapped. She still dreamt about that awful incident.

"Brynhild, it's us. It's Astrid Hofferson and Stormfly. Do you recognise us?"

She watched as the realisation hit the girl like a physical force, the blade almost slipping from her hand. Almost. "Astrid? Stormfly? If it's really you, who are these two clowns?" She waved her bright sword in the direction of Astrid's companions.

"That's Snotlout and Hookfang. Trust me, they haven't changed."

After a brisk laugh, She spoke again. "Very funny, I know those two idiots." Her face dropped like a lead weight. "That one. Who is it?"

Astrid bit her lip as Eret's face contorted with indignation. "That's Eret, son of Eret, and his dragon is Skullcrusher. They're... new, to say the least."

Without a word, the Gronkle rose up into the air until it was meters from ex-trapper and dragon. Eret glared as he was inspected, from his long chin, painted with two blue stripes, to his muscular physique, right down to the way his legs clung on around his dragon's neck. Astrid bit her lip for a second time, trying to ignore the metallic taste of blood. She remembered Bryn's stare, and how she analysed everything and everyone, laying them bare before her.

After a while, she harrumphed sniffily. "Charming name," She muttered, eyebrow raised.

"There's nothing wrong with my name!" Eret countered fiercely.

"I was talking about the dragon." She quirked an eyebrow.

"Well, I doubt yours is any better."

"What, my dragon? His name is Chunky, and before you laugh, it actually quite suits him. Besides," She added dryly, "I was rather upset when I chose it."

As she turned to greet Snotlout, Astrid couldn't help but notice the similarities in their accents. Eret had always sounded slightly odd, and now she realised that it was the same kind of odd as the girl who had once been her enemy.

With greetings fulfilled and Eret still glaring, she turned to Astrid again. "Would you like to come down for a snack? I'm sure you've had a long journey."

"Actually, we need to get going." Astrid smiled sadly.

"Yeah, pack your stuff. We're going to Berk!" Snotlout grinned happily. Brynhild, however, looked much less enthusiastic.

"Berk? I can't go back there, certainly not!" Her skin turned markedly pale. "I was exiled, remember? Besides, even if I was accepted, I don't think I could return. The people would not be friendly, and as for the memories, well..."

"We need you, Bryn. Berk is under siege from a terrible threat."

Hiccup wants you to come and help us defeat a dragon. A Rainfire."

"A what now?" The girl scowled unhelpfully.

"You know, like Blueflame." Snotlout instantly regretted the comment as he watched her whole body go rigid. "Hiccup wants us to stop it without hurting it..."

"A Rainfire? Is that what you're calling it? Well, I suppose it fits well enough. However, as you may understand, I have no desires to go back to Berk and to face a dragon such as my own dear Blueflame. Certainly not in battle. Absolutely not. Now, if you're quite finished, you can leave me be."

Snotlout cringed as she turned back for home, her dragon looking upset as he was turned away from his new friends. He looked at the others, and then took his dragon's horns and steered Hookfang down towards his friend.

"Bryn, please think about this! We need your help, and I promise it won't be too hard. You can come back and see Blueflame's grave and see Hiccup again now that he's chief! And we found his mother, she's really nice! Come on, Bryn, without you, we're toast. Don't you want to come back and help us?"

Bryn looked down, her long-lashed eyes shut, her thin lips trembling. "Oh, of course... I want to help. I've always, always wanted to help... But I didn't think I could go back..."

"But you can!" Snotlout threw his arms over his head. "And if anyone says otherwise, I'll punch them! Come on, for Blueflame, and Gustav, and all the others. Come back and help us."

The next thing Bryn knew, her changes of clothes were packed in a great sack strapped behind her saddle and she was stretched out with her head resting upon it, soaking up the rays of the mid-day summer sun. Carrying her loyally, Chunky was grunting and sniffing as though he were trying to make conversation with the other dragons around him. Below her, the sea stretched out for leagues in each direction and before her, Berk was coming closer and closer, just beyond the horizon.

So, they managed to recruit her. But how are the twins getting on? Find out next chapter!

9. Discovery

I'm really sorry about the awful deadline-keeping, guys. This is my life all the time, basically, rushing to keep deadlines and then forgetting all about them! Oh well, I'm sure you guys aren't gonna bite my head off, so I shall just have to try harder in the future!

Guest: She is indeed!

Hiccupisnotuseless: I know, I feel like it ma have been too quick... sorry

Guest: I'm glad too, and I'm sure you'll find she does!

The murky forest whooshed by below them, the tall, dark fingers of pines reaching up towards the dragon's underside. Barf and Belch dipped between boughs and around trunks as wide as houses. Atop their two necks, their riders searched the forest floor far, far below. Ruffnut and Tuffnut cast a glance at one another as the island fell away below them, giving way to churning waters. They looked out over the sea miserably.

"I'm bored. We've looked everywhere on the island. Twice!" Tuffnut groaned. "Can we go back yet?"

"Why don't we search the sea? It'll be easy enough. If there's anything, we'll see it. That means we'll only have to go out and around once." His sister sighed, rubbing her dry eyes.

"Oh, fine!" Her brother snapped grumpily.

He was cold, tired and hungry and nothing could stop the furious growl of his stomach as they continued out across the waves. They flew high up in the air, staring out into across the endless green-blue carpet. Despite the clear, blue sky and warm sun on their backs, there was still a distinct chill in the air as they swept round in a huge circle, Berk just a tiny speck on the horizon to their left. It was a long time before Ruffnut gave a shout, and within that time, her brother had all but fallen asleep against the warm neck of his dragon.

He sat up with a jolt, almost losing his duel-horned helmet in the process. The twin looked across to find Ruffnut pointing out across the waves, her eyes fixed upon a tall curl of ashy-grey smoke in the distance. He raised an eyebrow.

"So what? There's some smoke. It could just be a dragon."

The girl groaned. "Tuff, it's the middle of the ocean. Tidal class dragons don't breathe fire."

"It could be on an island." He reasoned. She sighed.

"Whatever. I still think we should go check it out."

The Zippleback responded with ease to their command, drifting lazily right in the direction of the strange curl of smoke. Barf and Belch's eyes were half closed, almost as though they themselves were falling asleep as they flew. Ruffnut, however, was sat bolt upright, nervous and tense. Some strange knot in her gut was telling her that this was it; the dragon rider's camp. She gulped, realising her hands were trembling and hiding them inside her jacket on the pretence that they were cold. Her brother was quite happily oblivious, and she looked out across the sea, wondering why on earth this had her quite so upset.

Then, she felt a twinge in her back, only tiny, but she instantly knew it wasn't this that she was nervous about. In fact, there was something that had been bothering her for a long time. Hiccup was bringing Bryn back. She drew her knees up to her chest, something she had only recently found she could do on her dragon's neck, hiding her face in the warm folds of fabric that made up her trousers.

"Hey, sis, you okay?" He'd noticed. Her heart almost stopped. Slowly, she looked up at him as though he'd caught her doing something unforgivable. He simply scowled in confusion.

"I'm fine, Tuff." She tried to cover up, but she knew just how hopeless she sounded. It bothered her. She hated feeling helpless.

"No you're not. I'm not stupid." He replied.

"That's debatable." She cut back with a seething reply, but she knew that this, too, was for nothing. "Look, Tuff, I'm not sure about Hiccup bringing that girl back."

"I know, I was thinking the same thing." This caught her by surprise. She thought that he was just okay with it, like everyone else. She never thought he might actually have an opinion of his own. "After everything she did, I just don't know if I trust her..."

"I know..." She could feel an uncomfortable tingle down her spine. She knew it was there, twisted and ugly, pulling her back out of shape.

"And what she did to you... I don't know if I could forgive her. I mean, we always wanted cool scars, but that thing's just... just..."

"Ugly," She breathed simply. Her lips pursed awkwardly.

"Can you.. can you still feel it?"

"Of course I can. My back twists because of it. And I still dream about it sometimes. You'd know. I think I've punched you a few times."

Tuffnut chortled as he nodded, earning himself a smile. Then he looked into the distance, where the ominous tower of smoke rose up into the sky. Tiny dark shapes were rising out of the water, bobbing up and down merrily on the sea. Ships. The snarling faces carved into the bows leered up at the dragon passing overhead as Barf and Belch dipped lower for a closer look. They could no longer see Berk, and the dragon was getting nervous, their eyes flicking this way and that, their muscles taught.

Then, they saw the lumbering shape snoozing on the front of a ship that looked as wide as it was long. The Rainfire. It was fast asleep in the warm sunshine, its purple scales glittering placidly, its wide, yellow eyes closed. The water drew shimmering patterns across the creatures jutting bones, its wide rib-cage, its paws. It didn't look healthy. Lash marks criss-crossed its wide rump and scars curled the corners of its mouth up in a cruel sneer. Obviously, the bit it wore was sharp and painful. It turned the twins' stomachs to see cruelty like this.

As they flew above it, Barf and Belch gave a sudden screech of alarm. The enormous yellow eye flashed open. The dragon flew to its feet like a guard dog, letting out a roar that shook the very air they flew in. The boat bucked wildly underneath it. A figure dashed up from below-decks, screaming at the dragon, long, leather coat

flapping, until he looked up and saw the dragon hanging frozen in the air above him. With an angry shout, he gave the Rainfire's rump a sharp slap and the thing came thundering into the air, straight towards them.

The twins gave identical cries of terror, their dragon turning towards home and beating their wings in a frenzy of fear. The two riders cast glances back over their shoulders, watching the huge, lumbering creature charge on in pursuit. However, they were too fast for it, slowly gaining ground. The Rainfire's bulk, though lighter than it should have been, was still too much to match the speed of the Zippleback it was chasing. They cheered, for a second, feeling like they were winning, but their celebration was short-lived. The tiny, fast black dragons, Triffins, with high foreheads and beady black eyes, were coming at them too, much faster than they could have imagined. Tuffnut was the first to point them out, his long finger following their movements.

"Come on, Barf! Faster!" Ruffnut cried in alarm.

"Yeah, go, Belch!" Her brother shouted to his dragon. However, no amount of encouragement could force the dragon to fly any faster. Its lungs and heart were already working overtime, muscles burning as it strained to protect its riders.

The first shot glanced off the Zippleback's left shoulder, then a second hit its same wing. Barf and Belch struggled to regain balance as they fell towards the sea, catching themselves just in time. However, the Triffins were still hot on their tails, and in a second, a peppering of hot bolts forced the Zippleback's wings closed and the dragon and riders plunged under the surface of the roiling, freezing sea.

Ooooh, dayam! Also, It's still the 31st by one minute!

10. Journey's End

Next chapter, next thing to wonder. How are those twins getting on? Well, I'm going to be cruel. You'll have to wait.

Astrid was getting fed up of the sideways glances Eret was casting this new girl. He looked like he was fuming, and she couldn't stand the rivalry that the two had already created between themselves. They weren't even talking, just glaring straight ahead and scowling at one another every-so-often. Even Snotlout looked despairing, shrugging to Astrid as though she could do something about it, but the only thing she could think to do was to put herself right in the firing line between them and start talking.

"So, mission accomplished! Well done, team. I think we did really well to find Bryn as fast as we did."

"Yes. Good work on the dragon's part." Bryn sniffed, raising an eyebrow. Eret audibly growled.

"Hey, what is your problem with me?" He asked in a voice that was as controlled as it possibly could be. Astrid groaned.

"No problem. None at all." She replied coolly.

Eret scowled further, if it was possible. "What do we need her for, anyway? I could trap that dragon with my eyes closed, just let me try!"

The runaway simply smirked. The ex-trapper looked furious.

"What's so special about this dragon anyway? Looks pretty boring to me."

"What's so special?" Bryn suddenly sounded very indignant. "Only that its fire can burn even dragons!"

Eret scoffed. "Oh, please! We all know dragons are fire-proof!"

"Oh, so you want to try some?" Bryn was baring her teeth as she turned to him in that all-too-familiar snarl.

"Guys, pack it in!" Astrid snapped viciously, finally having had enough. The arguing pair were at last quiet for long enough for the girl to have a breather. She looked out across the vast ocean, to where a dark shape was finally looming above the horizon. She grinned to herself. Berk was finally in sight.

"Is that Buck?" Bryn was pointing towards the island. Eret sniggered meanly.

"It's called 'Berk'! I thought you'd have known that if you'd been there before."

"It's been five years, Eret, son of Eret. I think you might forget the name of a place that you visited for two weeks and then never heard of again." She countered dryly.

Eret's gaze turned cold. "Yeah, but you didn't visit, did you? You blindly attacked them without even giving them a chance. They could have helped you."

Bryn turned away. For the first time, she was backing down, and the haunted look in her eyes gave Astrid the first indication that she actually regretted what she had done. However, just as her opponent was beginning to look proud of himself, she bit back again.

"You really think I'm proud of what I did? You really think I enjoy knowing that people died because of me?" Chunky moved closer to Stormfly, allowing Bryn to hop onto her back. Astrid scowled at the sudden boarding. "You think I like to know I got my best friend killed?" Walking out along Stormfly's wing, she stepped easily across onto Skullcrusher's, ending up stood right behind the rider on the Rumblehorn's back. As if she were a teacher about to tell her class a story, she lowered herself down, cross-legged, folding her arms into her lap.

"Let me ask you something. Imagine raiders attacked your home."

"I don't have to," He cut in, but he didn't stop her.

"Imagine they cut down your mother right before your 8-year-old eyes. Imagine you had to run for the forests and leave her behind, hiding out in a hole, waiting to discover what had become of your village."

Your island. Your home. Now think of going back and finding everyone gone or dead, living for years knowing you were the only survivor. Now, believe me when I say it's drives one rather loopy."

"I'm sorry, but I still don't think it's an excuse."

"It's not. I'm not trying to make it one. I'm just trying to let you into how I felt in those days. Luckily, it was your own Hiccup who taught me right and wrong. And Astrid, and everyone. They didn't hurt me or punish me, save for banishing me from the island. They nurtured me, and I've become a better person because of it."

Suddenly, she became very still and silent, watching her dragon, who was flying slightly erratically, snuffling and snorting, staring out at the ocean. With a sense of urgency, she scrambled back across to his back, settling herself in the saddle and following his gaze.

Snotlout, who had been fast asleep for quite some time, suddenly jolted awake to the sounds of shouting and thrashing in the water. He sat up quickly, looking around to find everyone staring at one particular disturbance in the water. He strained in to hear what it was saying, just like everyone else, and as they came overhead, they could finally make out the words that chilled them to the core.

"Tuffnut?! Where_ are_ you?!"

Without a second thought, the dragons and riders sprang into action. Snotlout and Hookfang dived straight for the figure in the water, the dragon snatching her up delicately in his long, scythe-like claws. Astrid and Eret threw ropes between their dragons, ready to dip under the water and lift the poor, stranded Zippleback out. As Hookfang again gained altitude, Snotlout hung down out of his saddle, grinning at the girl.

"Look, see? I'm good at rescues too! Why wouldn't you choose me?" All he received in return was an angry groan, before the twin returned to searching the water.

"I can't see Tuff anywhere! We were knocked down and I haven't seen him since!"

Snotlout grinned at the opportunity to show just how gallant he was. "Don't worry, babe, I'll find him for you!"

Meanwhile, Chunky was hovering above the water, Bryn using her sharp eyes to scan for any dark spots. It was easier when Barf and Belch were lifted out, because it was then that she clapped eyes on something floating just below the waterline.

"There, Chunks!" She pointed to him, and the dragon happily flapped over the lift the object out of the sea. The Gronkle sniffed curiously at the boy clasped in his talons, growling discontentedly. Bryn, too, examined their catch, scowling with worry. "Is he breathing?"

At that exact moment, there was a coughing and a spluttering and Tuffnut lifted his head sharply as though just woken up from a deep slumber. "Ugh," He complained hoarsely, "Why does my mouth taste so

salty?"

"Hmm, maybe you just nearly drowned?" Snotlout huffed, angry that it wasn't he who rescued the young man.

"Huh, that would explain it..." The twin muttered to himself thoughtfully as the dragon turned for Berk. Bryn cast a smile at Astrid, who returned it with relief.

"Come on, guys, time to head home..."

So that's what happened to the twins. There you go. Mind you, if you've ever tried swimming in the North Sea at any time, even in summer, you'll know that its not overly warm. How cold can you get before Hypothermia sets in? Answer: Core temperature drops by a couple of degrees. Bit of trivia there for you.

11. The Chase

Next chapter! What happens next? Cue some amusing chase music, because the residents of Berk aren't keen on their new friend...

Guest: Yup, just got there in time, didn't I? I almost forgot about it too, but it was one of my favourite parts of the story.

Hiccupisnotuseless: Yay! Twins love! Also, don't worry, I wasn't upset. I thought the same thing. However, I think Bryn had been waiting for a long time to make it up to the Berkians

Apjr: Thanks! Enjoy the story!

Guest: Exactly that, exactly that...

Guest: Thanks a lot!

SkulCandi: Oh man, I thought I was going to avoid this... Well, apart from the fact that I don't like writing soppy kissy stuff, You'll just have to wait and see, because I'm mean! I was planning for their relationship to become closer as friends in this book and then maybe get more than that in the next one.

Bryn leapt off her dragon as soon as they touched the ground, dragging the young man out from under Chunky and heaving him to his feet. She gave him a friendly smile, patting his back cheerfully.

"Uh, thanks for the lift?" He muttered, looking thoroughly confused. He couldn't say that before, he'd been very much convinced by Bryn's transformation, but there was a certain truth behind the joyful glimmer in her eyes.

"No problem!" She laughed heartily, then smacked him on the shoulder. "Go warm yourself up and get dried up." As he trudged off, followed by his sister, she grinned at Astrid. "I really missed this place. Thanks for bringing me back."

"Just don't set anything on fire this time, okay?" She chuckled

sarcastically, dashing away towards the chief's house. Bryn turned down the street, ready to explore, when she met the gaze of a villager who was staring at her in shock and fear. The woman dropped the leather jug she was carrying, the pearly milk spilling out everywhere, and lifted her finger to point.

"That's her! That's the girl that killed my son!"

Bryn's heart skipped a beat. People were muttering around her, some reaching for weapons, others recoiling in fear. She gulped as they came forward.

"You were banished!" One man hollered in her face. She stumbled back, reaching for the sword slung at her hip before stopping herself, remembering that she was trying to be nice to these people.

"I-I know! But, I'm good now, see? I'm not going to hurt you, I've changed!"

"That's what they all say..." A woman behind her bounced a club in her hand fearsomely. Bryn clenched her fists.

"I won't fight you. I don't want to. I'm here to help you with your dragon problem."

"You're the one who's causing it. I heard the chief say so!" The man was backed up by the angry muttering of the rest of the crowd. Before she knew what was happening, she was ducking beneath a club, then an axe, and then she stepped to the side of a sword. She snatched hold of Chunky as he took off and hoisted her to safety on the other side of the angry mob.

"Go, Chunky! Get out of here, leave me!" She watched as her green friend disappeared over the rooftops, then looked back to find the crowd surging towards her, a great wall of angry Vikings, all snarling faces and weapons and glinting armour. She turned tail and ran. Her feet pounded loudly on the dry, dusty ground of the road.

She turned a corner, but everywhere she went, there were more people looking up and joining the hoard. She even recognised a few. Was that not the forge-master at the front, missing an arm and a leg? And that was the father of Gustav, that poor, poor boy who had died in the smoke of her flames. Kat coughed, her throat closing up as she thought of what she'd done to these people. No wonder they were chasing her.

All she could think of was that she had to put all of this right, but the only way she could do that was by talking to a calm crowd, not a surging hoard of angry shouts and sharp blades. She pushed herself to run on faster. Maybe if she could get to Hiccup, he could talk sense into them.

She saw them before her, blocking her way out. Skidding to a halt, she span around, finding Vikings wherever she looked. She had to get up high, to escape, but if she did, they would just throw things until she came down. But perhaps, just perhaps, they might listen. Her back hit the front of a house, and suddenly, she knew where she was. There were two protruding carvings above her, the only parts of

the house that had survived after the war with Drago. And there, across the street, the food stores. She was back where she had first met these people, all those years ago. Her heart ached, tearing itself apart. This was what she deserved.

She closed her eyes for a second, taking a deep breath to steady her roiling mind before she turned and dived for the roof. Hands snatched at her ankles, but they were too slow for her. She climbed right up to the top, looking out over the sea of furious faces, out to the ocean beyond. Bryn took a deep breath to steady herself.

"Please, everyone, just listen to me! I'm here to help you! Ask your chief, he invited me here!" However, they wouldn't listen. She turned, hissing in anger, and her eyes caught on something behind her. A guttering, filled with water. Her eyebrows shot up. They were everywhere, these gutters, running over and between every single house. An idea dawned on her, forcing a grin onto her face. Very carefully, she stepped up onto it. To her relief, it took her weight.

Brynhild took careful steps at first, wobbling, unsteady, but a certain thrill filled her, and the adrenaline pushed her faster. She looked down at the gawking faces below her and let out a joyful laugh. This was what she was. A showman, a dancer, a fighter, not a peacemaker or a speaker. She bridged the gap between the houses slowly, but soon, she was running across the gutters as though she was born on a high-wire. Bryn was laughing right up to the point at which it was twisted and broken before her very feet.

With a scream, she crashed onto the ground. Dazzled and soaked, she scrambled to her feet. There was a deep, dull, thudding pain in her ribs that she clamped an arm around feebly as the crowd began to gather around her again. Without another choice, she drew her sword slowly.

"I don't want to use this. Please, don't make me..." She pleaded. One man stepped forward, his own sword in hand.

"Stand back, everyone. I will be the one to kill the fiend who took my child's life."

"Gustav's father..." Bryn breathed. A muttering went around the circle. "I swear, I didn't mean for anyone to die. I just... I don't know what I wanted." She put a hand to her forehead as he began to circle her. Gustav's father raised his glimmering sword. "Oh, this is all so messed up..."

"Perhaps you should have thought about that before you took my boy's life."

"I'm so sorry..." She choked feebly, head down. He struck out, and she was lucky to block the powerful blow. The crowd cheered as he did it again and again, pushing her back. The shouting reached a fever pitch as she yelled out in pain. The sword left an angry gash across her cheek, into which a tear slid and pooled in the bubbling blood.

"You shall die here, Kat." He spat out her alias like a sour morsel of food. Then, to his surprise, Bryn dropped her sword. A hush fell as she lifted her head to talk.

"Very well, kill me if you will. I don't want to live in a world that hates me, anyway. Just, before you do, remember this: You are snuffing out the very last hope you have of saving this village. I've tried being nice, but that's obviously not going to work. The truth of it is, your chief doesn't know what to do. He's as scared and confused as the rest of you."

"Silence! Don't you dare to insult our chief like that!" Gustav's father slammed the flat of his sword into her head. She fell back onto the ground, where she stayed, closing her eyes and waiting for him to finish her. They wouldn't listen. They'd never listen.

"She's right, you know." There was a crash as someone hit the floor, someone with one metal leg that gave off a distinctive clink as he paced around the circle. He thrust himself straight into Mr Larson's face, teeth bared. "Back. Down. That's an order." He watched with a certain pang of regret as the man avoided his furious gaze. "Look at yourselves! If this really the way we greet a Guest?"

"A guest? She's an enemy if you ask me!"

Hiccup gave an exasperated sigh. "Oh, Gobber, not you too! Of all the people I thought I could trust..." Hiccup rubbed his forehead, then looked up with determination. "She's right about everything. We need her, because none of us know what to do, including me. You didn't see her after her dragon was killed. You didn't see what it did to her, but I did. I saw her change. In fact, I made sure of it." He held out a hand to the girl who was still curled up on the floor. He saw her green eyes flash towards him. "She's our only hope. Anyway, I think she's got a pretty serious debt to repay to us."

Before anyone could say anything else, he grabbed Bryn's hand and hoisted her up, pushing through the circle of Vikings and storming off up the street, dragging her with him and not looking back.

I blitzed this for a full hour, the whole thing in one go. It was pretty intense. So intense that I had to take a break before proof-reading because my eyes went fuzzy. But there you go, I kept my deadline (mostly)!

12. Incoming

Finally, it's back! The Runaway has returned! So what happens to our beloved Berkians next? Find out here!

Guest: Good thing indeed!

Guest: Yes, a stunning welcome, but can you really blame them? Hiccup was probably doing something cheif-y when he saw the crowds.

_Hiccupisnotuseless: Thanks very much! I hope it was good enough. Bryn could only expect this sort of a welcome after what happened.

_

Guest(Apjr): This is what happened to the twins!

"What happened to you guys out there?" Hiccup leant back against the

heavy table, staring through the dreary darkness to his friend, slumped forwards in a chair, rubbing her forehead with one hand. The fire seemed to her to have no heat. Perhaps it was wasting its time trying to push away the darkness, she thought to herself. Everything was lit with its warm, golden glow, and yet it still looked dank and dark, so that she could hardly see the piles of unwashed clothes, the mess of furniture, the general untidiness of her home.

"I already told you! We were shot down by that crazy dragon!" Ruffnut growled to her chief. "We saw the ships, we got too close and that evil thing woke up and attacked us!"

"Are you sure? Is there anything else you can remember? Anything at all?"

"No..." The young woman let her hand fall from her head and rose to stand closer to the fire. Despite having had a warm bath and changed into dry clothes, the cold of the sea was still biting her. Her fingers shook as she held them out to the trembling flames.

"It didn't just attack us! That guy whipped it!" Tuffnut was pulling on a shirt as he emerged from a back room into the dim firelight. Hiccup's eyebrows shot up.

"He whipped it?"

"Sure. It growled at us and then he came on deck and started shouting at it and then whipped it to get it to chase us." Tuffnut explained in his rambling way.

"Oh yeah, I remember that," his sister breathed, stroking her long chin. Hiccup nodded and smiled.

"Is there anything else you can remember? Maybe after you hit the water?" He pressed the twins for information. Every morsel was of the utmost importance.

"I got nothing," Tuffnut shrugged unhelpfully, looking across to his sister. The thoughtful look in her eyes made him scowl. "What is it, sis?"

"As we flew away, I remember them setting the sails on those ships. Don't you?"

"Setting the sails?" Hiccup cried out involuntarily. His hand flew to his forehead. "Oh, no, no! They wouldn't chase one dragon with a fleet of ships! They must be coming for us!" His voice was high and urgent, his face slowly growing pale. "How many of them were there?"

"Dunno," The sister shrugged, "Maybe twenty or thirty?"

The chief took a deep, steadying breath before turning to the twins. When he spoke, his voice was strong, calm and assertive. "Ready yourselves for battle. Weapons, ropes, armour and everything. Meet me in the main square in fifteen minutes."

>With that, he strode out, leaving his two friends to exchange anxious glances.<p>

* * *

><p>The door smashed open wildly and the chief hurried inside. Bryn could almost smell his sour fear, feel his racing heartbeat flowing through the air, taste the sweat beading on his brow. It made her tense, her already-aching head threatening to grow worse. She turned to look at his mother, who, though she had just treated her wounds, was not being overly friendly. Even she was distracted from her hostility.<p>

"Hiccup? What on earth is the matter?" She asked softly, so kind and caring and heartfelt that Bryn almost forgave her. Almost.

"They're coming. We need to get ready."

"Who? Who's coming?" Bryn only realised afterwards how obscenely, childishly excited she sounded. To tell the truth, her heart was already pounding, but she couldn't be bothered to tell herself it was wrong. She simply ignored Valka's disapproving look.

"The man and his dragon. They're on their way to us right now, them and their entire fleet of ships. Oh, Gods, is the village ready for another dragon attack?" He sounded more afraid than Bryn had ever seen him. Her excitement was quelled, and she was left feeling sick and fearful herself. She glanced across at Valka again, observing her deep, worried, shining eyes and wondering what it was to have a mother who cared so much.

"I'm here to help this time. They don't stand a chance!" The young girl smiled encouragingly, but obviously, it had come across to Valka as a vain and rude comment. She couldn't bear that horrified scowl. Bryn never saw the softening in the chief's mother's face as she turned away, embarrassed.

"You need to stay here. You're hurt." Hiccup looked at her calmly.

"Oh, please, I'm an psychopath, not a coward!" She replied defensively. "You may not be willing to risk my life, but I am. I'd rather die a hero than live as a scoundrel."

"Very noble," Valka replied sarcastically. Bryn ignored her again.

"Yes, it is," The chief defended her, "And I will need you near me. Mum, go and warn the rest of the village. Get everyone into the Great Hall. I need to gather my riders."

Valka hurried off quickly, leaving Bryn alone with Hiccup as he tested all of his dragon's flight gear. She watched the way he whispered and soothed Toothless while he fastened all the buckles and tightened all the straps. The saddle was an awe-inspiring piece of engineering. Only the most brilliant mind could possibly have conceived the idea, and for that, Bryn respected Hiccup more than anyone else she knew.

"Couldn't you at least try to get on with my mum?" He asked her flippantly. She snorted and folded her arms.

"Why don't you ask her to get on with me?" Bryn retorted unkindly. "She's the one who seems to have some sort of vendetta against

me."

"Yeah? Well, I couldn't possibly think where that comes from!" Hiccup rounded on her; very unlike him, she felt. "People don't like it when you ransack their village, plunder their food and valuables and take innocent lives! They tend to hold a grudge!"

Bryn physically staggered back. It was like being hit with a sledgehammer, straight to her chest, and it hurt. A lot. She wrapped her arms around her stomach and let herself fall back against the chair behind her.

Hiccup gulped. He couldn't believe he'd just lashed out at his friend like that. "Bryn, I'm -"

"You just love it, don't you, you people? You just love playing the 'Gustav' card, don't you?" Her voice trembled. Her pride was the only thing stopping her from crumbling and running away. She shook her head slowly, avoiding his gaze as he bit his lip. He stepped forward to apologise again, but she flinched away as though he were a red hot poker. "I'm not proud of anything I did, but when you're that young and that hurt, you'd do an awful lot of things to get back at those who hurt you."

"Bryn..."

"No, shut up, I don't care what you have to say. You want help killing people? I'm your girl."

Hiccup groaned. "I'm not asking you to kill people!"

"Whatever," She replied. Her knuckles cracked as she pressed her hands together. "If it's such a big deal, I'll at least try to get on with Valka, but let's be honest, what more can I do?"

Oh, I'm so excited for this battle! How will they protect their village? Find out soon!

13. The Battle Begins

It's so good to be writing again! I'm really enjoying this story and planning it all out in my head. I'm also looking forward to things to come!

Hiccupisnotuseless: We've already discussed this over PMs, but just for the rest of my readers, I realise that it was out of character for Hiccup to yell at Bryn, but he did so because he was/is extremely stressed. As for how he spoke to the twins, he waited until they were warm and out of danger before he spoke to them. Also, presumably, he'd already asked them if they were okay before he started pressing them for info, I just didn't write it in because it's not relevant to the reader or to the progression of the story. Problem solved? If not, feel free to PM me and allow me to argue my case further! (That goes for everyone, not just Hiccupisnotuseless)

Cloudjumper slammed into the ground next to the house, his rider launching herself from the saddle as her son and his dragon left their house. Before him, his riders were amassing, lining up to receive their orders in the square before the man's house. Behind

him, his friend trailed a short distance behind, her head held high, shoulders back, as though the events inside the house had never even transpired.

Astrid stepped forward from her cyan Deadly Nadder and nodded her head to the crowd coming down the steps towards them. The building perched on a high crest of rock like a bird, marking it out from the rest. A Monstrous Nightmare's head was carved into the cross-beam, watching over them all as the chief came to a halt before his riders.

"Today, Berk comes under attack once again. We need to stick together as one to stand a chance of surviving. Mum, is everyone in the great hall?"

"Everyone is accounted for," Valka replied, standing at his shoulder.

"Good. We're expecting a fleet of thirty ships, lead by a man and a Rainfire dragon, along with the large flock of Triffins that we saw last time. Astrid, Mum, your dragons are fast and manoeuvrable enough to take the little dragons down. Snotlout, Fishlegs, Eret, Ruff and Tuff, I want you to hammer the ships as hard as you can. Whatever weaponry they have aboard needs to be destroyed as soon as possible. I will stay here with Bryn and Toothless and try to separate that man from his dragon. If we can do that, I believe the dragon will stop it's attack and may well be rendered trainable. Good luck to all of you: Look after each other and your dragons. We're not losing anyone this time."

Bryn folded her arms, looking at everyone as they nodded their heads and mounted up. Hiccup put a hand on Toothless' saddle, feeling the Night Fury purr beneath his fingertips.

"Everyone, take your positions along the rooftops. Shout if you spot the fleet."

As the riders obeyed their cheif's commands, Valka pulled her son aside, away from Brynhild, who was checking Chunky's saddle.

"Are you really sure about this, son? Shouldn't I stay near you?" She asked in a hushed voice, leaning close.

"If you're worried about Bryn, she won't hurt me, mum. Trust me, I'll be fine."

"She's killed before. I wouldn't be surprised if she did it again." Valka's eyes were as hard as stone.

Hiccup scowled. "Mum, come on!" He raised his voice so that everyone could hear. "Whatever murderous stories you've heard about Brynhild are all false! She didn't kill Gustav, he died in a fire. It wasn't her fault! She never meant to hurt anyone and I trust her completely! So whatever ideas you've got in your mind, you can get them out. Mum, please, you have to trust me. I wouldn't send you away if I didn't feel completely safe."

Valka glanced at Bryn, who was trying to ignore the proceedings by tightening her sword-belt, and then nodded. "Okay, Hiccup. I trust you. Just be safe, alright?"

Hiccup smiled. "I will. I know you're just trying to look after me, and I appreciate it, I honestly do."

With a sharp nod and quick smile, Valka leapt up into the saddle of her dragon and she and Cloudjumper took to the air. The Stormcutter's four wings knifed through the warm summer's day as they ascended towards the soft, pink-ish white clouds. The village was eerily silent, barely a breath of wind rustling the tough, spiny bushes dotted about. Every rider waited with bated breath for a sign of the oncoming storm.

"I see them!" Eret cried out. His sharp eyes spotted the forest of black spots on the horizon before anyone else and he raised his arm hurriedly to point. Every heart skipped a beat as the throb of heavy wings came closer and closer. They could hear the dragon, but they couldn't see it.

Suddenly, explosions rang out along the edges of the village. The Triffins were here. Like tiny black insects, they swarmed around the riders, distracting their dragons. In fact, it almost caused Hookfang to leapt backwards off the roof in his excitement to catch them.

"Mum, Astrid, now!" Hiccup cried. Stormfly gave a squawk and set off into the sky, firing spines from her tail left, right and centre. Similarly, Cloudjumper came barrelling down from the clouds and sent volleys of spiralling flame swooping through the air towards the little dragons. The two bigger dragons drew the fight away from their companions, giving them a good line of sight towards their next threat. Hiccup clipped his metal leg into the stirrup and swung up onto his dragon's back as the creature came closer.

The hulking dragon was like a huge, armour-plated rhino with wings, its tree-trunk legs tucked neatly under its body, its scales shimmering purple in the summer sunlight. Its velvet-grey underbelly caught the chief's eye. He had seen for himself how soft and vulnerable that skin was. Hiccup waited until the dragon passed the first of the huge, carved Vikings that stood sentinel in the bay before he gave his command.

"Riders, go! Take out the ships, leave the dragon to me!"

At Hiccup's command, the four remaining dragons took off in a flurry of leathery wings, pounding off towards the sea. Hookfang snapped his teeth at the enemy dragon as they passed, but Snotlout stopped him.

"Easy, Hookfang, he's not the target." Then, he raised his head and shouted out loud to the other riders. "Last one there has to clean all the dragon stalls!"

* * *

><p>Bryn stared at the dragon. She knew every inch of that hide, every shining plate, every muscular joint, every strong claw. She stared as it roared, looked into its throat, at its flat, grinding teeth. She saw its short tail and short horns, and in it, she saw her own beloved Blueflame, ripped from her by Hookfang's merciless claws. She had deserved it, of course, but it still hurt. She looked into

those violent, violet eyes, imagining them turning blue, staring at her with loving devotion, and it made her feel once again that raw nerve that was left by his loss. She realised just how much Blueflame had meant to her once again.<p>

"Bryn? Hello?"

"Huh? What?" She let out a breath that she didn't realise she was holding. "Did you say something?"

"Are you okay?" Hiccup looked at her with kind concern.

"Fine, why?" She replied hurriedly.

"You're crying," He replied bluntly. Her hand flew to her face; sure enough, when she pulled it away, her fingers glimmered wetly, but she could only feel a numbness spreading from her belly, that kind of numbness that threatens to drag you down into the pit of your own despair.

"It's dust." She snapped defensively. Then, she looked at the dragon, a hard look in her eyes. "Let's take it down."

* * *

><p>Valka watched another dragon fall beneath the heat of her dragon's flames. Cloudjumper had laid waste to all those who dared get close enough. She felt terribly sad; all of those poor little dragons, hurt and frightened. The one she really wanted to get at was the one making them do all of this. That great brute of his wouldn't keep him safe for long. However, she could feel that her dragon wouldn't go near it. Cloudjumper was too scared, remembering what its fire had done to him last time. She turned back for her son.<p>

"Bryn, I need weaknesses. What can we do against it?" Hiccup asked his pouting counterpart.

The girl sprang into action. "Three. It has three main weaknesses." She dropped to her knees and began to draw the outline of the creature in the dirt. "One: plate gap." She drew an arrow towards the back of its neck. "You shoulder remember this one. A well-aimed blast to the back of the head when it's looking down should knock it out for a second. Two: pressure point in the belly." She drew another arrow. "Toothless will remember this one too. Actually, I don't think he's forgiven me yet. Jab it in the belly hard and it will be in agony. And then..."

"And then what?" Valka leant over her son's shoulder as Bryn stood up, hands on her head.

"One more, one more! Oh! There's one more!" Bryn screwed up her face as she tried to remember it.

"Oh yes, great, just forget one of its weaknesses right when we need it, won't you?" Valka groaned.

"Oh, forgive me for trying to block it out of my- block it! That's it!" Bryn's retort was cut short as she suddenly remembered the third weakness. "You've gotta â€" oh! I have to get up there, Hiccup.

No-one else can do this but me."

Valka pulled a rather ugly face.

Hiccup scowled. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that this method can bring this dragon down for good, but if it's done wrong, it'll never trust us again. It could die if I'm not the one to bring it down. Hiccup, you'll have to trust me on this one: It's this or kill the Rainfire."

_Ooh! What's Bryn planning? Find out next week! Don't forget to R+R!

>

14. Take Her Down

We're off again! What was Bryn planning on doing? What is her secret method that can disable a dragon's flight? Find out now!

_Hiccupisnotuseless: Strange? I would've said cool! And don't worry about Valka, She'll come around once she sees that Bryn's heart is pure. _

Jesusfreak: Thank you very much!

"And how exactly can you bring a dragon down so easily?" Valka looked both disbelieving and genuinely curious. Bryn shrugged.

"Rainfires have those big sticky-uppy shoulder plates, right? So, if you pull on them hard enough at just the right time, you can catch them under the plate on the back of their neck, which traps their wings; and when a dragon can't beat its wings, it can't fly." Valka looked horrified, then confused.

"Could that really work?"

"I know it's hard to believe, and I don't blame you for doubting me, but it really does work. I managed to do it accidentally to Blueflame once."

"How did you..?" Hiccup began, but looked back at the approaching hulk and thought better of it. "Okay, if you think it'll work, I'll trust you. Take Chunky and-"

"No." Valka folded her arms. Both young adults looked at her in confusion. She stood for a second in silence. "That's a bad idea."

"Valka's right: Chunky's too young still for war. Remember, Hiccup, as much as he may be fully grown, he's still just a baby. He's hard to control."

Another moment passed, and then Valka held out her hand to Brynhild.

"You understand dragons, just like we do. I think it's time we began to trust each other. Come with me; Cloudjumper and I will take you

up."

Bryn stared incredulously, before she slammed her hand into Valka's open palm and let the woman drag her to her Stormcutter's side and help her onto Cloudjumper's back.

Bryn looked back at Hiccup and called out to him, "Hiccup, keep her distracted. We'll sneak up on her."

"Her?" The chief asked, dumbfounded.

"The dragon! She's obviously a she, can't you see that?" Bryn laughed as the Stormcutter launched himself up into the air and beat up, up and away. Hiccup turned to Toothless.

"Actually, I had no idea..." he murmured.

Bryn's heart hammered with excitement and fear as Cloudjumper and Valka brought her closer to the Rainfire. She couldn't stop just one hand reaching forward to grab Valka's belt. Her fingers were suddenly shaking, a mixture of dread and impatience thrumming through her, twisting inside her stomach like two snakes entangled, embroiled in a duel. She could smell that familiar, sour smell, like mead left too long, pungent and dangerous: the Rainfire's deadly breath hissing closer.

Valka's cold hand reached back and wrapped around her own. "Be careful, and good luck. You do this, and I'm pretty sure we can forget about what happened before. Maybe my son will even allow you to stay here."

"I don't intend on coming back." Bryn replied shakily. Valka turned around to sit cross-legged and examine her. The young girl could barely hold her gaze. "Take good care of Chunky for me, won't you?"

"We won't need to. Cloudjumper and I, we're here to help you. We'll take care of that man so you can focus on the dragon. You'll be fine. No-one's becoming a martyr today; I'm gonna make sure of it."

"Valka, I... I'm sorry for everything. I really am."

"Oh..." The woman's signature smile broke across her face, wrinkles crinkling the edges of her eyes. She reached forward and gave Bryn a tight hug. "I know I've been hard on you this past day, but I think I can see now that you're not a bad person. Just like some of my dragons, you're just... confused."

Bryn nodded against the older woman's shoulder. Cloudjumper gave a growl as they came close to the Rainfire. A shiver ran up Bryn's spine. "I wish I had a mother like you, Valka. Hiccup's lucky to have you."

Valka gave a short laugh. "Well, he didn't for twenty years, now, did he?" A shot rang out, thrumming through the air as it exploded off the purplish dragon's shoulder. Toothless had begun his assault. "Now, get out there and help him. Help us, Brynhild."

Bryn stood up carefully, looking over the Stormcutter's shoulder as

the purplish dragon passed below, reeling from another plasma blast. With a nod, she unsheathed her stunning sword and threw her arms out wide, letting herself fall from Cloudjumper's back and plummet towards the other dragon.

A second passed where her stomach pressed against her throat, then her feet found solid bone plates. She rolled along the dragon's back and came up, sword raised, ready to bring it down upon the man at the dragon's shoulder. A sudden, calculated thrust to the gut, however, made her stagger back with a grunt. The man rose up unsteadily, clutching a brute of a blade, all twisted, unpolished iron. He had seen her coming.

She blocked a vicious swing, then another and another, all the while trying to ignore the throb in her stomach. She was being being pushed back along the dragon's spine. Her sword was like a flash of silver, dashing back and forth in style. She hadn't thought this scoundrel would be so clever, or have seen her before she attacked. However, he had, and now he had the upper hand. She tried to keep her expression calm, make every movement seem effortless, but in reality, she was putting every ounce of focus and strength into every single swing.

The man thrust forward, his arm jutting out, and Bryn saw her chance. Her blade flashed, the man cried out, and she lifted her leg to viciously kick him back. He stared with disbelief at the gash on his upper arm, as though he couldn't understand quite how his opponent could have put it there.

"Come on, little girl, is that the best you can do?" He goaded, flexing his fingers. Bryn's temper flared, her cheeks flushing with anger.

"Actually, no," She replied icily, "Once I've killed you, I'm gonna bring your dragon down and redeem myself amongst these people."

"Nothing can bring this ugly beast down," He growled.

"That's where you're wrong," Bryn replied coldly. She suddenly dropped to her knees. "One: about me," she gave a sharp whistle, "And two, about the dragon". The great man gave a jovial cry and raised his sword to behead her.

He never got the chance.

The next second, in a flash of brown scales, Cloudjumper swept down and snatched the enemy up in his claws, whisking him far away from Bryn. She returned the wave Valka gave as she flew away. The Rainfire watched, bemused, and tried to look back to see what was going on. Bryn saw the cruel barbed bit that tore at the poor dragon's mouth, the too-tight girth on its saddle that had been left on so long, it was beginning to become a part of the dragon's flesh. She blanched. It was so cruel, it brought tears to her eyes.

But she was here to do a job, and do it, she must, before she tried in any way to help the poor beast. Its great maw opened, streaming fire as though that whip-bearing scoundrel were still in the saddle giving orders. Loyal to the end, just like she always remembered. Mentally, Bryn prepared herself. It was time.

Bryn is about to put her plan into action! But what about the others? Find out soon!

End
file.